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New Yorker critic Alex Ross talks interpreting Wagner

Posted by [Todd Morman](#) and [Will E. Brooks](#) on Fri, Apr 4, 2014 at 3:02 PM, [Archives](#) | [RSS](#)



Courtesy of Alex Ross

One thing is certain about anyone who attends New Yorker music critic [Alex Ross](#)' talk this afternoon at 4:15 p.m. in UNC's Gerrard Hall: that person will learn something fascinating about Richard Wagner and his effect on American culture in the late 1800s.

Alex Ross is one of the most consistently engaging, erudite and readable critics in the country right now; His first book, *The Rest Is Noise*, was a detailed look at 20th century music that made accessible complex political interactions between classical music, the New Deal, Stalin and Hitler, as well as providing an excellent roadmap to the heated, often doctrinaire debate about atonality that suffused the post-World War II classical academy (among many other pleasures). The book is a must-read for any music fan.

Ross' next book, *Listen To This*, was a less unified but excellent collection of his [New Yorker columns](#),

-ranging across subjects like Cecil Taylor, Schubert and Sonic Youth. A high point was the essay tracing the history of the descending "[lamento bass](#)" figure from Spanish musicians in the 1500s through [Monteverdi](#) and down into Led Zeppelin's "[Dazed and Confused](#)." It's the kind of thing Ross does so well: thoughtful, provocative well-researched essays that take the reader to surprising places.

His talk this afternoon is titled "Big Ballads of the Modern Heart: Sidney Lanier and Early American Wagnerism," and is a preview of the third chapter from his latest planned book, *Wagnerism: Art in The Shadow of Music*, due out in a couple of years. Ross has been exploring Wagner's deep, broad cultural influence—he pays close attention, for instance, to what he calls "Black Wagnerism," the affinity felt by people like W.E.B. Du Bois for Wagner's work. The *INDY* spoke

with Ross about Wagner, race and modern opera; an edited transcript is below.

TODD MORMAN: *Let's start with this: What exactly is Wagnerian about W.E.B. Du Bois?*

ALEX ROSS: Well, Du Bois was fascinated by Wagner, going back to his period when he was studying in Berlin in the 1890s ... He also went to Bayreuth in the year 1936, the summer of the Nazi Olympics. He spent several months in Germany undertaking a complicated project which ostensibly has something to do with industrial education methods, but the rationale for the grant he received from a German-American foundation was for studying racism in Germany and racial attitudes in Germany.

He was horrified by anti-Semitism but said that he himself was treated respectfully when he traveled and did not experience racism firsthand. You can take that at face value or not. But Du Bois said, going back to those days in the 1890s, when he came to Germany this was the first time in his life that he felt that he was being treated respectfully as a black man, and that he felt more or less on equal terms with those around him. The point is that Du Bois had this great veneration for German culture, German philosophy and literature and music. He detected in it this powerful idealistic energy that he felt could be translated into any context. He felt that it could in fact have great meaning for African-Americans, and that African-Americans specifically have something to learn from Wagner.

Again, we think of Wagner as this completely nauseatingly racist man and thinker, but it's a little more complicated than that. He was unquestionably an anti-Semite. In terms of his attitudes toward people of color, there's much less evidence. It just wasn't something he spent a lot of time thinking about and being concerned with. You actually find a mix of opinions in his second wife's diaries, which record everything that came out of his mouth in the last year of his life. But Du Bois himself found Wagner inspiring; In this remarkable story, "The Coming of John," the music of Lohengrin is this gleaming, distant image of beauty and freedom and possibility, sort of a mirage of a perfect world.

Given a few more fascinating stories like that, I can see how the idea of a book about Wagner popped into your head.

Really, the core of the book is to describe this phenomena that many people may have forgotten about or not been aware of: how widespread Wagner's influence was on the arts and on literature. It was absolutely enormous. He influenced this really endless list of major writers and thinkers—Nietzsche and Baudelaire and Mallarmé and Proust and a very long list of French writers. You have Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Willa Cather, Thomas Mann ... in a lot of these writers very often you find there was ambivalence, or early infatuation followed by later rejection; Joyce I think falls into that category. Even that is an important influence, the overcoming of an early infatuation with Wagner.

For the Modernist generation, Wagner was associated with this very heavy, foggy, sort of perfumed fin de siècle aesthetic, he was associated with Impressionism to some extent, symbolism and decadence. So the next step was to banish the murk and then present something much sharper and more objective, or more

harshly realistic—the whole gamut of ideas associated with modernism.

The question of Wagner's personality, his personal traits, his beliefs: In that period there wasn't so much focus on that, I don't think it was until later in the 20th Century that we came so consumed with the issues of Wagner's biography and his influence on Nazism was something that really came to the fore after World War II. That has come to almost dominate the picture of Wagner.

You yourself say he made "a number of absurd and repulsive pronouncements on all matter of topics," right? It's an obvious question, how do you separate that out from the positive influences? What would you consider the negative influences?

I don't consider "are these positive or negative?" but as a historian I want to describe this phenomenon year by year and let the reader decide.

[Laughs] Good luck with that. Everyone's gonna want to know your opinion.

I know. But what I really want to do is simply show the breadth of the influence. I do think it's very important to establish Wagner's quite powerful influence on the anti-Semitic movement. For a long time in the Wagner world there were attempts to sort of brush that under the rug. In the '60s, when the Bayreuth festival got going again, there was this attitude of 'let's not concern ourselves with politics, we're talking about music here.' There's kind of a deep politicization that has happened there. A lot of very good scholarship has been done on Wagner's influence and the quite crucial role that his ideas played. His family was increasingly snarled in these movements and eventually formed a relationship with Hitler himself. So yeah, this has been established and it's very important. There will be what I anticipate will be a quite frightening chapter at the heart of the book where I confront all of that. But what concerns me is when the focus on the Nazi Wagner excludes the rest of the picture. If the average person was asked, 'who was Wagner?' you get, 'Hitler's favorite composer.' For me, that's a very dissatisfying answer, and I'm afraid that it actually gives a little too much credit to Hitler. It's a minor victory for Hitler, I'm afraid, if we let his taste for Wagner become and remain the defining one. And there's simply a very big loss that happens if you look at Wagner that way, because you are ignoring the side of Wagner that was some sort of anarchist who was a determined opponent, most of the time if not all of the time, of state power, a man who hated authority. He had this capacity, despite all of his horrible beliefs, to explore compassion, pity, a sense of identification with the downtrodden. With this book I just wanted to show everything—the whole political spectrum, the whole intellectual spectrum, this mastery of artists—and just set it out there. We'll see what people make of it.

In terms of breadth and depth of his influence, pre-internet age, on both sides of the Atlantic, can you think of anyone in modern times he's comparable to?

I think Wagner is a singular phenomenon in music. I don't think there has been any other figure in the entire history of music who has had an influence of this nature; musical aesthetic across many cultural fields, intellectual, philosophical and political.

So it's more than enormous fame.

It's a pretty singular phenomenon, and I don't know if in other fields, in literature or in painting, it's also difficult to identify a figure who has had quite this effect. And I don't mean that purely in a positive sense. Part of what staggers us about the phenomenon of Wagner is the evil that was attached to his name and the negative side of the influence. But, you know, that really adds to the breadth of the phenomenon and makes it something we need to come to terms with.

Two quick questions about modern, director-driven productions: There have been unusual, often-controversial productions—set in concentration camps or the gold mines of California—that put Wagner in odd settings. Have they been successful in helping modern audiences connect with Wagner, or do you prefer more traditional productions? Can you name a production that took some chances that you thought was particularly successful?

I've sort of gone through an evolution with these more adventurous styles of opera production. I think earlier I had a more conservative attitude about these productions. But yeah, as I've seen more I've really come to appreciate the limitation of that more conservative style. I've seen some really extraordinary and successful attempts along these lines. I think fundamentally it's healthy, it's inevitable; The world that we live in is going to employ directors to direct the operas, we need to give them liberty as artists to express their ideas.

Are they helping modern audiences connect?

That's really an open question. I think you find a lot of people, a lot of newcomers to opera who can receive Wagner operas for the first time. They might dwell more avidly, or comprehend more easily what's going on in a much more traditional production. You could argue that you should start with the much more conservative productions so they can sort of get the picture of what these operas were originally about, then you can take the step to something more avant garde. That was certainly my story. The first Ring that I saw was the picturesque, conservative Ring at the Met. Then I started finding other approaches. But, on the other hand, there's something like the Patrice Chéreau Ring from 1976, which many millions have seen by video. I think this is an extraordinary production that accomplishes both things in one. It gives you the essential story but at the same time it's this incredibly sophisticated meditation from a contemporary director's viewpoint on Wagner's politics. It's very much a left-wing reading of The Ring, an allegory for 19th Century capitalism and its supposed downfall, which is actually a reading that very much conforms to the ideas that Wagner himself was elaborating circa 1848. That was a singular feat, Chéreau was an insanely great director who had the ability to give you this spectacle that almost anyone off the street would find involving and gripping, but at the same time there were these great intellectual layers and complexities to what he was doing.

A lot of productions don't manage to accomplish both of those things at once; they fall into one category or another. Either it fits the sort of picturesque production, it doesn't give you very much in the way of ideas, or it's a very complicated, challenging, provocative

production that gives you a great deal to chew over intellectually, but perhaps quite a bit of the story is getting lost in the process, and it may baffle someone coming upon the opera for the first time. We haven't figured all this out. I think certainly there are ridiculous extremes that directors go to, but there are also tremendously dull productions that are just sitting there in opera houses, especially American opera houses, and giving the impression of opera itself as rather intellectually pale.

Because they're not taking any chances with the production? Why especially in America? You think European productions are more willing to take chances with the work?

It's certainly a phenomenon that exists. There's a very drastic difference between how opera is done in America and how it's done in Europe. Why that exists is sort of the harder question. Just the fact that European productions are state funded means they don't need to justify themselves so much to a board of directors. And there's a tradition of it. This experimental style of production goes back to the early years of the 20th Century, and especially the 1920s, early 1930s in Germany ... Because classical music itself is the native heritage of Germany and France and other countries, it's not this deluxe import and maybe there is more of a willingness to not be so protective of it.

Here, opera comes from abroad. We have these fixed images of what it should look like and how the audience should behave and this whole rather fake, antiquated, bourgeois atmosphere that we create around it. And that ends up imposing limits ... So yeah, there's definitely a resistance there which is a little difficult to overcome. It's worth trying.

Are there singers today who are trained well enough and have the natural talent to do justice to Wagner's difficult music?

We do, actually. I might have answered that question a little more pessimistically ten years ago, or even just five years ago. Going back decades now, you'll find people saying 'all the great singers are in the past,' and not just Wagner, but other fields, and 'these singers today just can't make the grade, either technically or interpretively.' And then somehow a new wave of singers comes along and we keep going. In the past five or ten years I've seen the emergence of some really powerful Wagner sopranos. Nina Stemme and Christine Goerke are two really powerful voices who are giving this great new life to these extraordinarily difficult roles. There are contenders out there, sort of younger singers, who also prove to have what it takes to sing Brunhilde and these other kind of roles. In terms of tenors, this is a real problem. This kind of tenor voice who can be heard over the raging Wagner orchestra and who can sustain the stamina to survive Siegfried or Act III of Tristan. We don't right now have a singer who is absolutely, unambiguously mastering these roles. There are quite a few who can get through them, and can do quite well, but at least right now—of course there are some promising prospects out there—it is a little bit of a gap, a big gap, in Wagner casting. I think actually, despite the tenor issue, we're living in a pretty good period for Wagner singing, and especially with this latest surge of sopranos. I really don't see any reason for pessimism. There are singers who have mastered these roles, and are singing them very, very

well.

Many Israelis completely object to any staging of Wagner's works in Israel. How much do we still need to apologize today for presenting Wagner's music? Is that fair?

Quickly, with Israel, if that's possible, it's become wrapped up in contemporary Israeli politics. There are liberal Israelis in Tel Aviv who think that Wagner should be played. It's wrapped up in bigger and even more taxing questions in politics. My personal opinion is that Wagner absolutely should be played in Israel; it would be intellectually healthy for his music to be heard. It's a healthier debate if the music is actually being heard, and people can evaluate the works and how they play on stage. This ban against Wagner in live performance—of course it's not an explicit ban, but he can't be heard at concerts and on stage. He can technically be heard on the radio, on television and that doesn't really make sense to me. If the idea is to accommodate to the sensitivities of Holocaust survivors, wouldn't it make more sense to reverse the equation? It's when something is heard on the radio that you might come upon it accidentally, whereas when Wagner is being announced, being performed at a particular time, those who don't want to hear the music can avoid it. There's something topsy turvy about the way this is being presented.

I think there are some problems, there are some myths that have arisen around this question of Wagner and Nazi Germany. There's actually quite a widespread idea now that Wagner was often heard in the concentration camps, that he was being played over loudspeakers as people went to their deaths. There is almost no evidence that any such thing happened. So much of the evidence suggests that the music heard in the death camps was light music, it was waltzes, it was marches. This horrible irony, of course, that it was light music being heard. Of course, Wagner was heard much more widely in Nazi Germany, in propaganda, movies and public circumstances, so there's that association. This is an issue for musicians. There are generations now of Israeli classical musicians who have learned their instruments without ever playing Wagner, and that's a professional problem for them ... Musicians need to know Wagner. If you're a horn player, if you're a trombone player, especially the brass sections, this is a really important part of your orchestral repertoire. It's simply time, in the early 21st Century, to step back a little bit from this very powerful identification—Wagner, Hitler—absolutely not to conceal it, and to absolutely keep it under a spotlight but let's have a wider picture of what Wagner meant, historically, and what he can mean today. There's some very interesting work people are doing with Wagner and environmentalism. There's so many resources you can draw upon in terms of talking about Wagner, presenting Wagner, staging Wagner, interpreting Wagner. There's still so much to be done, I think, with Wagner and I think this should be happening in Israel and everywhere else. But ultimately, it's not for me to say, and it's something I'm reluctant to speak about.

But surely you're going to talk about it in your book?

There's a very substantial heritage of Jewish people engaging with Wagner, grappling with Wagner, loving Wagner or hating Wagner. There's a history there, and it exists and is part of Jewish history. Banning Wagner, I just don't think that's a healthy way to sustain a debate ... I would like to actually go to Israel and talk to people and gather information about this question. I'm hoping I might be able to go the next time there's an enormous Wagner blowup in Israel.

How do talks like the one in Chapel Hill relate to the eventual book?

What I'm going to do in Chapel Hill, this talk will be very much based on the third chapter of the book, which is going to be Wagner and Victorian England, Wagner and Gilded Age America. It seems to be an opportunity for me to road-test some of my ideas in front of a knowledgeable group of scholars and students that are interested coming in from the area, and just see how it goes and see what people find interesting, what they find less convincing, what they just find boring and sort of gauge how all of this will play. It's very important for me to take advantage of these invitations such as UNC extended to me to create that kind of community for myself. It's going to be a two-part talk, and the first part will be giving this overview of Wagner in America, Wagner's own peculiar idea of immigrating to America ... a lot of the 1848 generation, revolutionaries and left-wingers, fled Germany after the failure of revolution in 1848 and started playing an important role in American culture, in American politics. A lot of them had also been introducing Wagner to Americans and we're going to talk about that.

Then, later in the Gilded Age, Wagner became this very grand, elevated phenomenon. There was this extricated image of Wagner, as this pure, sacred, almost religious phenomenon, especially with Parsifal ... We talk about Whitman too. Whitman saw Wagner as a kindred spirit, in terms of sense. A lot of what he knew about Wagner was conveyed to him by younger followers and enthusiasts who were also Wagnerians. So he sort of adopted their language. Wagner for him was free, unbounded emotional expression and directness; the endless melody, feeling and this visceral energy spinning forth. So that was what Wagner was about for him, and with his own poetry. Lanier responded and rejected that aesthetic, and wanted something more formally limited and contained. It's interesting, the notion of two poets quite diametrically opposed, aesthetically and politically as well, but both identified with Wagner and felt in a sense that Wagner was on their side. This happens a lot, the confusion of Wagnerism as a phenomenon. You can find people all across the spectrum, and people who are in fact diametrically opposed to each other calling themselves Wagnerians. The question is, 'what is Wagnerism?' It depends very much. It varies wildly from place to place and from time to time. That's what makes it interesting, even if ultimately you are unable to define it.

<http://www.indyweek.com/scan/archives/2014/04/04/new-yorker-critic-alex-ross-talks-interpreting-wagner>

Never Surrender: Wagner on War & Culture

By [Richard Widmann](#) May 21, 2013 @ 12:02 am In [North American New Right](#)



Richard Wagner by Arno Breker, Bayreuth

Not symphonic music, but rather the shattering roar of cannon announced the birth of Richard Wagner on May 22, 1813 in Leipzig. The German kingdom of Saxony had been overrun by the French troops of Napoleon Bonaparte as he made a last-ditch effort to reassert dominance over Europe.[1]

Since the Treaty of Posen was signed in December 1806, Saxony had been one of several German principalities reorganized by Napoleon into the new *Rheinbund* or Confederation of the Rhine.[2] Kings and princes offered Napoleon "tribute" in the form of money, men, and equipment. In the summer of 1812 Napoleon rode across Germany, its undisputed master, en route to Russia. By autumn the *Grande Armée* felt the pain of defeat. Napoleon lost over 400,000 men in the Russian snow and was forced to retreat back across Europe.

Napoleon was not yet finished however. In March 1813, French soldiers advanced toward the Elbe River. The main action of this new campaign occurred in Saxony, which Napoleon planned to use as a base for his immediate goal – the capture of Berlin. Although other German rulers were anxious to avenge the years of French oppression, the King of Saxony never wavered in his support of Napoleon. He sent what was left of his army to fight side by side with the French helping them to win the battles of Lützen and Bautzen in May.[3]

In October Leipzig was the scene for the *Völkerschlacht* or "Battle of the Nations" when Napoleon was defeated by the combined forces of Russia, Austria, Prussia, and Sweden.[4] Saxon troops, betraying their king, besieged within the city by the Allies, deserted both him and Napoleon, whose vanquished forces were soon fleeing toward Mainz and the borders of France itself. The First French Empire was crumbling, and within half a year Paris too would fall.

Richard Wagner's father, Karl Friedrich, was the registrar of police in Leipzig. Exhausted by an overwhelming number of official duties resulting from the military campaign, he was especially vulnerable to an epidemic of typhus that flared as a result of corpses lying unburied in the streets. He died six months after Richard's birth on November 23, 1813.[5]

The mutiny of King Friedrich's troops exemplified popular Saxon feeling. The French were detested, and stories of Napoleon's treatment of Germany were most certainly heard by the young impressionable Richard.

Richard Wagner is best known for his massive "music dramas" that still captivate large audiences whenever they are performed in the world's greatest opera houses. In addition to his fantastic musical landscapes, Wagner commented and philosophized on many subjects throughout his lifetime. From musical concerns and art to Judaism and race, Wagner was never shy to opine. Wagner's comments on the subject of military conflict not only provide a glimpse into his political thought which began to take form from the time of the Dresden Revolution in 1849, but also provide us with insight into what his views might have been during the Twentieth Century's two great cataclysms.

There were four wars involving German states during Wagner's lifetime. The first war was the previously noted Napoleonic War. Wagner was only an infant and his subsequent recorded comments are very limited. In 1864, the Prussian-Danish war would be fought likewise with little comment from Wagner who was busy with various personal matters.[6]

In April of 1866, a few months before the Austro-Prussian war broke out on June 14, Wagner denigrated Bismarck as "an Ambitious Junker [who] betrays his imbecile of a King [Wilhelm I of Prussia] in the most brazen manner." [7] The outcome of the war, however, caused many Germans, including Wagner, to revise

their opinion of Bismarck. Bavaria joined the other states in the German Confederation in supporting Austria, but with Prussia's decisive victory in July, the Confederation disintegrated and all eyes turned to Bismarck as the builder of a new German nation-state. His leadership qualities commanded respect and many believed that he had opened the way to the long-sought national unification.[8]

The Franco-Prussian War

It was at this time that Wagner was still completing his *magnum opus*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Wagner's slow progress can be attributed to the shadow of war as well as the birth of his son Siegfried on June 6, 1869.[9] The Franco-Prussian war which finally broke out in July 1870 with Bavaria siding with Prussia, was fought against a background of rising national pride in Germany. The partisan attitude of Wagner and his mistress and future wife Cosima reflected the prevalent sentiment among Germans.[10] Cosima's frequent diary entries regarding the Franco-Prussian war provide researchers with wonderful insight into Wagner's views on the conflict.

Cosima's entry on Friday July 8 is the first entry regarding the events that would ultimately result in war: *Rumors of war, because of a Prussian prince's ascending the Spanish throne; the French as always ridiculously excited by something happening without their consent*. [11]

In July of 1870, Spain was looking for a new monarch. Leopold, the hereditary prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, was one of the possible candidates for the throne. Bismarck saw the obvious advantages of such a link with Spain. He wrote to Charles Antony, Leopold's father, showing the vital service that could be rendered to Germany through the acceptance of the throne.[12] Leopold gave in to Bismarck's arguments.

Anti-Prussian and anti-German writers have claimed that this in some way placed the responsibility for the war squarely on Bismarck. The British military historian Sir Michael Howard objectively responds to such historians, . . . *that is no reason to see in [Bismarck's] policy, as have so many French historians, a 'trap' deliberately laid for France*. [13]

Bismarck had certainly hoped that the election would be concluded before Napoleon III could do anything. France, feeling insulted, instructed the Ambassador to Berlin to demand that the Prussian government not approve of Leopold's acceptance of the Spanish crown and that the Prussian King, Wilhelm I, order him to withdraw.[14]

Cosima comments on the French ultimatum in her entry dated Wednesday, July 13 [1870]: *A guide brings news that an ultimatum has been sent from Paris to the King of Prussia, saying he should forbid his relative to accept the crown, otherwise war!! I am quite beside myself over this example of French insolence; this nation deserves a merciless chastisement*. [15]

The French had actually threatened, *if the King will not advise the Prince of Hohenzollern to withdraw, then it will be war at once*. [16] Finally on July 12, Charles Antony would renounce the throne on Leopold's behalf. The French were not satisfied with this resolution and demanded, to the humiliation of Prussia, a promise that the candidature would never be considered again.[17] Cosima relates this event in her diaries, no doubt

exemplifying Richard's growing concern over the worsening situation:

The arrogant and wicked French are not content with the withdrawal of the Prince of Hohenzollern, they are demanding through their envoy Benedetti a promise from the King of Prussia that he will never give his approval to the acceptance of the Spanish crown by any Prussian prince. The King quite rightly refuses to receive the envoy. So now they are arming! This news upsets us greatly. [18]

France's behavior had angered the Prussians and the Germans, whose feelings are clearly reflected by Wagner as recorded in Cosima's diaries. On the night of July 17, a frightful thunderstorm raged, Cosima noted, *the gods are angry with the French*. [19] Upon France's declaration of war, Wagner remarked, *Typical of a Frenchman: he does not keep his word, but when one reminds him of it, one is obliged to fight a duel with him*. [20]

Wagner was completely content with Prussia's representation of Germany as a whole. There is little doubt that Cosima's thoughts mirror those of Wagner; she writes on July 17 of her *complete sympathy with Prussia*. Richard and Cosima were completely disgusted with the French. Wagner said, *The French are the putrefaction of the Renaissance*. [21] Wagner actually demanded that his friends understand how much he and Cosima hated the French character. [22]

Cosima made a typical entry on July 18 regarding the French behavior.

The more one hears of the French behavior, the more angry one becomes; a tissue of lies, ignorance, insolence, and conceit. As reason for the war Gramont and Ollivier cite the memorandum which Bismarck is said to have circulated to all foreign courts. There never was such a note — just the telegram which was published in the newspapers, and so it is all pure lies. [23]

By this time Wagner was ready to glorify war. Wagner commented: *War is something noble, it shows the unimportance of the individual; war is so to speak, a dance performed with the most dreadful of powers, like a Beethoven finale in which he unleashes all the demons in a magnificent dance*. [24]

In her entry of July 28, Cosima related information revealed to the world press by Bismarck of France's plans of conquest that Napoleon III had entertained in 1866:

The newspapers report some splendid revelations by Bismarck; he has had the Times informed of the proposals which Benedetti unceasingly made to him (French invasion of Austria, so that they might then conquer Belgium, then supplies for the Southern states, enabling them to take over French Switzerland, and other savory things of that sort). The French do not know what to say, except that the Emperor knew nothing about it, or that Bismarck had provoked it all. [25]

By July 31, Cosima recorded Wagner's increasingly negative views of the French, *France needs a Moltke cure*, of course referring to the Chief of the Prussian General Staff, Graf Helmuth Carl Bernard von Moltke. [26] By August 4, Wagner's anti-French tone would switch to a pro-Bismarck, pro-unified Germany tone.

Ever-mounting pleasure in Bismarck, whose revelations show ever more clearly how wisely and at the same time how righteously he has been acting; he says he did in fact have to temporize with the French in order to enjoy at least a few years of peace. He has also forced England, by casting ceaseless aspersions on its actions, to stop supplying France with coal and ammunition — How uplifting it must be for Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg to be fighting now as a German army![27]

On August 5, in a fit of nationalistic fervor, Cosima wrote, *God bless Germany, the German army, as it is now called!*[28]

Not unlike the great wars of the 20th century, propaganda was widely used by both sides during the Franco-Prussian War. Richard's and Cosima's acceptance of the German perspective and categorical dismissal of French propaganda is important, not only in order to better understand their position on the Franco-Prussian war but to provide insight into what their opinions might have been on the two world wars that Germany fought against France in the 60 years following Richard's death.

By August 6 widely varied news was appearing regarding the events of the war. Cosima leaves no room for doubt as to hers and Wagner's position, *Who is lying and who is telling the truth; the first the French are doing, the second the Germans.*[29]

Cosima's diary entries continue with numerous accounts of atrocities as carried out by the French.

August 13: Our troops are advancing ever farther, God be with them, We read the most frightful accounts of the inhumanity of the French, wounded men and doctors are being murdered, one of the former had his eyes gouged out by a 14-year-old boy! It is terrible.[30]

August 23: At Metz the French have fired on a soldier bearing a flag of truce and on his trumpeter; thus do they persist in their inhumanity.[31]

As the war progressed, conflicting viewpoints and various propagandized accounts reached Wagner. This only strengthened his resolve in the correctness of the German perspective. Wagner became so angry with the behavior of the French troops that he advocated the burning of Paris:

R. says he hopes Paris will be burned down — the burning of Paris would be a symbol of the world's liberation at last from the pressure of all that is bad. R. would like to write to Bismarck, requesting him to shoot all of Paris down. Discussion of the situation, R. believes the German reports implicitly.[32]

On August 24, the day before their marriage, Cosima took the time to make the following entry, condemning the lies spread by the enemy newspapers.

The French newspapers continue to spread lies, they say that the Germans maltreat the wounded and that they seize all the young French people and force them to fight in the front line; these lies are responsible for all the terrible reprisals practiced by the French.[33]

A few days later on September 2, Wagner made his opinion on the disputed territory of Alsace and Lorraine clear with what Cosima referred to as a "terrible vehemence": *The doctor comes and is addressed with terrible vehemence by R., because he is of the opinion that it is 'not good' to take Alsace and Lorraine away*

from the French! R. enlightens him as to the disgracefulness of a neutral policy.[34]

Finally, with the defeat and surrender of the French, the newly married Wagners would rejoice; taking the victory personally. In the following entry, the French capitulation is viewed as a christening present for their son, Siegfried.[35]

September 3: The entire army under Wimpffen has capitulated, Napoleon III has surrendered to the King!! What a christening present for Fidi [Siegfried]! [36]

Similarly, on September 4, Wagner would credit himself for somehow, mystically causing the German victory: *The news is correct, we have seen the bulletin. God in Heaven, what an outcome! 'I am bad for the Napoleons,' R. says. 'When I was six months old there was the Battle of Leipzig, and now Fidi [Siegfried] is hacking up the whole of France.'*[37]

Unlike the subsequent two wars that would pit the French against the Germans, the British did not intervene on the side of the French. Bismarck's publishing of Napoleon III's proposal for France to be given Belgium was enough to swing the British to a neutral if not Prussian position on the war. Similarly, the publication of Napoleon III's request for a slice of West German territory also sufficed to rally South Germany behind Prussia. In January of 1871, the German princes proclaimed the Second Reich; Wilhelm I of Prussia became the Kaiser on January 18, 1871. Ten days later the armistice was signed between France and Prussia at Versailles Palace. Bismarck achieved his great object of unifying the German peoples, with the notable exception of Austria, in six short years. Bismarck was now able to annex the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, which had originally been German and whose inhabitants were of mixed German and French stock and language. In fifty short years, Alsace and Lorraine would be lost to France as part of the vindictive Treaty of Versailles.[38]

Nicht kapitulirt!

Wagner's politics strongly supported the new German Reich during this period and manifested itself in a number of lesser-known works. In January 1871, Wagner composed a short five-stanza poem entitled, "An das deutsche Heer vor Paris" (To the German Army before Paris) which celebrated German military conquest and the new Reich.

The ruler calls:

*the weapons of a whole great race attend him,
the braggart brawls
of threat'ning arrogance o'er there to end him.
its muscles strain,
with might and main
it falls upon the hec't'ring foeman:*

our Germany alone breeds men not women.[39]

Wagner sent his poem to Bismarck at Versailles, who replied with congratulations on Wagner's artistic triumph over the Parisians.[40] April of 1871 brought the first performance of the *Kaisermarsch* written to celebrate the coronation of Wilhelm I, a work that Wagner hoped would become a new national anthem.[41]

One of Wagner's most criticized works of the period was *A Capitulation (Eine Kapitulation)*. While written in 1870, the work was not published until 1873. Although William Ashton Ellis correctly explains that the work castigates the Germans as much as the French and that

the parody is harmless, it is not difficult to see why a Frenchman of the time might take offense. While Wagner's real target is indeed the Germans and their attachment to French Opera and culture as opposed to true German Art, French culture is devastatingly disparaged throughout the short play. In these years prior to the *Ring* cycle and *Parsifal*, Wagner's music was not yet widely popular. His works were the cutting edge of the *avant-garde* and certainly did not compare with the popularity that composers like Gioachino Rossini and Giacomo Meyerbeer achieved at the time.

Wagner relates in his preface to *Eine Kapitulation* that his young friend, Hans Richter found it impossible to concoct the music à la Offenbach [that] the satire rally needed; and that taught us, in turn, that everything requires true genius and a natural gift, both of which we gladly accorded to Herr Offenbach in this department.[42]

Wagner portrays Victor Hugo constantly popping up from the sewers of France, an obvious stab at *Les Misérables*. Hugo exclaims, *I am here, not through the Prussian ranks, but underneath them*. Hugo's slithering through the bowels of Paris renders him "matter for 120 volumes." Images of the "Holy guillotine," and only those in the sewers finding anything to eat, Paris was undergoing a terrible shortage of food at the time. The Chorus of the National Guard sings "Republic! Republic! Republic-blic-blic!" to the strains of the can-can. The total decay and lack of values, the constant babblings of atheists and revolutionaries paint the absurd canvas. Amidst this chaos Wagner brings rats to the stage. When the cry goes up that "The city is starving" the chorus breaks into, "Rats with sauces, sauces with rats! Here, pass them, or hunger will dine off our hats!" Finally the rats metamorphose into Ladies of the French Ballet.

For all the vicious attack on French culture, it is perhaps Hugo's final speech that is most significant. Hugo welcomes the Prussians into Paris for after all it is the Parisian culture that has forced the true Capitulation of Germany. It is important to note that Wagner originally entitled his work, *Nicht kapituliert!* (Never Capitulate!).[43] "Never Capitulate!" was Wagner's warning to the Germans. Do not give in to this alien culture. The words that Wagner put into Hugo's concluding lines highlight his warning, "Then come quick and get yourselves *frisés, parfumés, civilisés!* The great nation will lend you its tone, and its terms are so foolishly easy! Send your soldiers away, while the diplomats stay!"[44]

Wagner prefaced his work by explaining, "We Germans really present a far more laughable figure; for in all their follies the French have always shewn themselves original, whereas our odious imitation of them falls far below the point of ridicule."[45] For Wagner, the alien French renderings of true German works were horrifying. His criticism of alien influence on German art and culture originally manifested itself in *Judaism in Music* (*Das Judenthum in der Musik*), with a different target. Wagner's most famous rendering of this theme however comes in the conclusion of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Hans Sachs's famous speech would years later bring a largely National Socialist audience to their feet at Bayreuth[46] breaking into a spontaneous version of *Deutschland über Alles*.

Evil deeds threaten us; once the German realm and its people fall under false foreign rule, soon no king will understand his people, and they will sow the seeds of deception and falsehood in our German lands; what is German and true will no longer be known, unless it lives in the honor of the German Mastersingers.

Wagner's attack on alien influence on German culture and art would eventually carry over to biological issues. His final prose works would address this theme often. The theme of racial decay would be carried on in the works of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Alfred Rosenberg, and Adolf Hitler.[47]

Wagner died on February 13, 1883, six years before the birth of his most infamous admirer. Today Wagner is widely denounced as the spiritual father of both National Socialism and Adolf Hitler. Some 60 years after Wagner's death, the impact of Hitler and World War Two on Wagner's reputation cannot be overlooked. While many contemporary Wagnerians prefer to dissociate Wagner completely from this time, it is his greatest critics who may be closest to the truth.

Researchers can only surmise what Wagner would have thought about World Wars One and Two. His strong support of the German position during the Franco-Prussian War likely provides some insight. It may be that the viewpoints of his son-in-law and ardent Wagnerian Houston Stewart Chamberlain could be representative of Wagner's perspective on World War I. During the war, Chamberlain became one of the best-known writers supporting the German cause. Kaiser Wilhelm acknowledged his work by awarding him the Iron Cross in 1915.[48] By the time of the Second World War, the Bayreuth Festival was being run by Wagner's daughter-in-law Winifred. While there is no way to determine if Richard would have shared his daughter-in-law's views, Winifred is recorded in a letter written in 1947:

I more or less remained faithful until the bitter end, only because I knew this man [Hitler] to be kind, noble, and helpful. It was the man and not the Party that held me.[49]

In 1975, an unrepentant Winifred declared in an interview with German filmmaker Hans-Jürgen Syberberg:

I shall never disavow my friendship with [Hitler]; I cannot do it . . . I am able, I mean, perhaps no one understands, but I am able completely to separate the Hitler I knew from what he is accused of these days . . . The part of him I know, so to speak, I treasure as much today as before. If Hitler came in the door today, for example, I would be just as pleased and happy as ever to see him and to have him here.[50]

If French cannon announced Wagner's birth, it may be said that, 60 years later, Allied bombers broadcast his death. Allied warplanes bombed Bayreuth and destroyed part of his home just as Allied propaganda attacked his reputation. The low point for Wagner and Wagnerism surely came with Germany's defeat in 1945. Dutch author Martin van Amerongen recounts, *[Americans] danced the jitterbug on [Wagner's] grave, wearing bearskins from the theatre wardrobe.*"[51] Winifred was outraged by the fact that "black soldiers danced in the Wahnfriedgarden with blonde German girls." [52]

The American occupying authorities violated German law by ignoring the clause in Siegfried Wagner's will which insisted that the *Festspielhaus* be reserved exclusively for his father's works.

Wagner's *Festspielhaus*, a lasting monument to the pinnacle of Western art and culture, was turned into an American soldiers' dive and space was allotted for an All-Girl Revue. After the crudeness of the "All-Girl Revue" foreign operas such as *La Traviata* and *Madame Butterfly* were performed on Wagner's stage.

It was apparent that the Allies did not care much for German honor, art, or values; if they cared at all, it was only to defile them.[53] At the time the idea even surfaced to convert the *Festspielhaus* into a theater reserved only for the music of composers who had been persecuted by Hitler's National Socialist regime.[54]

After a seven year hiatus, the Bayreuth *Festspielhaus* was considered cleansed of National Socialist influence. In 1951 Wagner's works, now sufficiently de-Germanized, were once again performed. What had once been a near-religious rite had now been secularized. Author Frederic Spotts comments, "By the time it ended, it no doubt remained that the old orthodoxy in interpreting and staging Wagnerian opera had been irreparably shattered." [55]

This was a new Bayreuth for a new Germany. No longer would Wagner's works be representative of German honor, art, and values but rather of a timeless, nationless psychological and symbolic world. Today the denigration of true German honor, art, and values is widespread as is the more generalized attack on the honor, art, and values of the West. For those who choose to defend it, Wagner's admonition, *Nicht kapituliert!* should never be forgotten.

In fact, it should become a rallying cry.

Notes

[1] Robert W. Gutman, *Richard Wagner: The Man, His Mind, and His Music* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 1.

[2] John Chancellor, *Wagner* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), 1

[3] *Ibid.*, 2.

[4] *Ibid.*, 1.

[5] Robert L. Jacobs, *Wagner* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1980), 1.

[6] The Prussian-Danish War was the second military conflict resulting from the Schleswig-Holstein Question. It began on February 1, 1864, when Prussian forces crossed the border into Schleswig. Denmark fought the combined armies of Prussia and Austria. In 1864 Wagner was working on his massive *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. At the time he was living in his home *Triebtschen* near Lucerne, Switzerland as he was still an outcast of Germany due to his role in the revolution of 1849. Also in 1864, the Vienna production of *Tristan und Isolde* was abandoned after 77 rehearsals and deemed impossible to perform.

[7] Stewart Spencer and Barry, *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1988), 593.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Ibid.*, 598.

[10] Cosima Wagner (December 24, 1837–April 1, 1930) was born Cosima Liszt. She was the daughter of the renowned pianist and composer Franz Liszt. In 1857 she married Wagner's friend and conductor Hans

von Bülow. After giving birth to three children fathered by Wagner — Isolde, Eva, and Siegfried — she and von Bülow would finally divorce. Wagner and Cosima were married at Lucerne, on August 25, 1870. For more on Cosima Wagner see George R. Marek, *Cosima Wagner* (London: Julia MacRae Books, 1981).

[11] Cosima Wagner, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries, Volume I: 1867–1877*, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 243.

[12] Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870–1871* (New York: Dorsett Press, 1961), 49.

[13] *Ibid.*, 49–50.

[14] *Ibid.*, 52.

[15] Cosima Wagner, *Op. Cit.*, 244.

[16] Howard, *Op. Cit.*, 52.

[17] *Ibid.*, 53.

[18] Cosima Wagner, *Op. Cit.*, 245.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid.*, 246.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*, 248.

[23] *Ibid.*, 246.

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] *Ibid.*, 249.

[26] *Ibid.*, 250. Helmuth Karl Bernhard Graf von Moltke (October 26, 1800–April 24, 1891) was a German Field Marshal. Von Moltke served as the chief of staff of the Prussian Army for thirty years. He is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest strategists of the 19th century, and an innovator in methods of directing armies in the field.

[27] *Ibid.*, 251.

[28] *Ibid.*, 252.

[29] *Ibid.*, 253.

[30] *Ibid.*, 256.

[31] *Ibid.*, 261.

[32] *Ibid.*, 259.

[33] *Ibid.*, 262.

[34] *Ibid.*, 266.

[35] Wagner's son Siegfried (June 6, 1869–August 4, 1930) was a composer and a conductor. He served as artistic director of the Bayreuth Festival from 1908 until his death in 1930. During the summer of 1923, Siegfried was in Munich to conduct a concert that was cancelled due to Hitler's *Putsch*. Siegfried and his wife Winifred were horrified as they witnessed Hitler, Ludendorff, and Göring being fired upon by soldiers of the Bavarian government.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Russell Grenfell, *Unconditional Hatred: German War Guilt and the Future of Europe* (New York: Devin-Adair Company, 1954), 53.

[39] Richard Wagner, "To the German Army before Paris," *Richard Wagner's Prose Works, Volume V, Actors and Singers*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (New York: Broude Brothers, 1966), 2.

[40] <http://www.allmusic.com/composition/kaisermarsch-heil!-heil!-dem-kaiser-for-male-chorus-orchestra-www-104-mc0002368853> ^[2]

[41] David C. Large, "Wagner's Bayreuth Disciples" in *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), 75.

[42] Richard Wagner, "A Capitulation" (*Eine Kapitulation*), *Richard Wagner's Prose Works, Volume*

V, *Actors and Singers*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (New York: Broude Brothers, 1966), 5.

[43] John Deathridge and Carl Dahlhaus, *The New Grove Wagner* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), 175.

[44] Richard Wagner, "A Capitulation," Op. Cit., 33.

[45] Ibid., 6.

[46] Bayreuth is a town in northern Bavaria, Germany in which Richard Wagner made his home from 1874 until his death. Wagner's house, *Wahnfried*, was constructed from 1872 to 1874 and has served as a museum since 1976. Since 1876 the Bayreuth *Festspielhaus*, which was constructed for the sole purpose of performing Wagner's music-dramas, has been the location for a near-annual festival of Wagner's music.

[47] See especially Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. John Lees (New York: John Lane Company, 1912); Alfred Rosenberg, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century: An Evaluation of the Spiritual-Intellectual Confrontations of Our Age*, trans. Vivian Bird (Newport Beach, California: The Noontide Press, 1993); and Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. James Murphy (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1939).

[48] Geoffrey G. Field, *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 365. Chamberlain published numerous articles and pamphlets justifying the war as a selfless cultural crusade. These were printed and distributed to

hundreds of thousands of German soldiers. In 1916, Chamberlain renounced his British citizenship and officially become a Bavarian subject.

[49] Frederic Spotts, *Bayreuth: A History of the Wagner Festival* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), 203.

[50] Ibid., 268.

[51] Martin van Amerongen, *Wagner: A Case History* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1983), 5.

[52] Spotts, Op. Cit., 201.

[53] Amerongen, Op. Cit., 125.

[54] Ibid., 126.

[55] Spotts, Op. Cit., 212.

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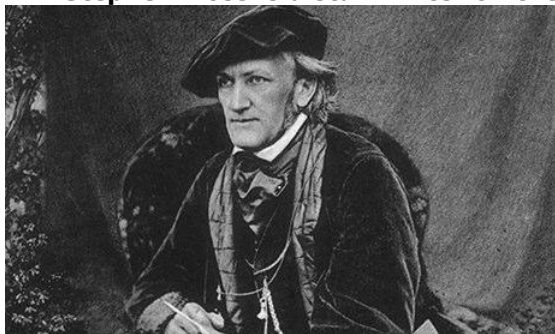
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A to Z of Wagner: - continued from Newsletters Nos: [717](#), [723](#), [730](#), [731A](#)



Stephen Moss

Stephen Moss is a staff writer on the Guardian. Monday 30 December 2013 18.00 EST



Never yachted.... Richard Wagner, photographed in 1868. Photograph: Hulton Archive/Getty Images

X is, as tradition dictates, for xylophone, of which Wagner would have been an accomplished player if he had learned the instrument.

Y is for yachting, an activity which, as far as we know, Wagner never pursued.

Z is for Zzzzzzzzzzzzz, which is the state 15 hours of the Ring can reduce you to, especially at the air conditioning-less Festspielhaus in Bayreuth in the middle of summer, unless you prepare yourself rigorously for the ordeal - calisthenics, jogging, don't eat carbohydrates, don't drink champagne, get plenty of sleep, get to know the libretto inside out so you can

understand every nuance. It'll be worth it. Hey, wake up there at the back!



It's all over. She's singing. Photograph: Jon Riley/Getty Images

<http://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog+series/wagner-a-to-z>

>>>>>>>>and now some 1975 & 1978 memorabilia from a Melbourne Wagnerian<<<<<<<<<

The Australian Film Institute presents

The Confessions of Winifred Wagner

A film by Hans Jurgen Syberberg. (G)



The Confessions of Winifred Wagner cannot be side-stepped: here is a film that has itself written a page of modern history. *VARIETY.*

The most revealing and remarkable document about fascism ever filmed.

TIME OUT, LONDON.

The Confessions of Winifred Wagner is an interview with Winifred Wagner, the 78-year-old daughter-in-law of the composer Richard Wagner and directress of the Bayreuth Festival during the Hitler era. Winifred Wagner reminisces and discusses with us Richard Wagner, Adolf Hitler and the National Socialists with horrifying candour and without evasion. The emphasis is predominantly political, providing insights into the organization and reactions of the National Socialists in Hitler's reign. But we are also given a portrait of Hitler as a friend, and of the affection he engendered in the Wagner family. In Winifred Wagner's words, 'If Hitler were to walk in the door today, I would be just as pleased, just as delighted to see him... I will always remember him with gratitude.'

'This film represents a confrontation with the past, calls attention to things forgotten, things that were suppressed: Hitler was a participant, not an unfortunate exception in the history of the bourgeoisie. He represented continuity — 'education', 'humanitarianism', and 'art' were milestones along the road to catastrophe. The overwhelming factor here is the absolute innocence with which people measured themselves; the unscrupulousness with which they operated.

Salzburger Nachrichten

'... The Confessions of Winifred Wagner is a masterpiece, not only as a record of a woman's life, but also as a probing of the realities of National Socialist Germany. It is devoid of false analysis, mock anger, and makes its appeal to reason rather than to the emotions. Yet, it remains the warning of such horrors occurring again, 'It is easy not to be a Nazi if there is no Hitler.'

Scott Murray, Cinema Papers

The Confessions of Winifred Wagner is available for hire from:
The Vincent Library,
Australian Film Institute,
81 Cardigan St, Carlton VIC 3053.
For bookings phone 347-6888.

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WINIFRED WAGNER

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I9. I2. 78

Dear Sir.

With great pleasure I received your kind acknowledgement of my "agressive" Syberberg-Interview - and thank you very much indeed for your kind Xmas greetings - Wishing you all the season's best and a happy New Year.

sincerely, Yo urs

Winifred Wagner

WINIFRED WAGNER, the English daughter-in-law of the composer, died this month at the age of 82, which has reminded some music-lovers that she was responsible for the loss of three of the great man's masterpieces.

She gave them to Hitler, of whom she was inordinately fond and he was reported as taking them with him to the Reichchancellery bunker in Berlin (where the burned bodies of he and his mistress Eva Braun were found) saying: "They will be much safer with me."

HERALD 1838

died 5.3.80

Frank Winifred Wagner
Siegfried Wagner Haus
Bayreuth.

1978

Dear Madam, I wish to thank you for so promptly answering my query regarding the pronunciation of H.S. Chamberlain's name. Since then I have had the great pleasure of ^{twice} seeing the Syberberg film, a documentary of the highest historical importance. I came away with the impression of a granite rock standing in a ^{furious} ocean, ~~of~~ against whose base the waves of malice and calumny beat in vain.

I wish you a most happy Yuletide ~~and~~ may you be spared many ~~more~~ years to remain an example to the ~~weak~~ and an inspiration to the ~~strong~~.

WINIFRED WAGNER

SIEGFRIED-WAGNER-HAUS
D 8580 BAYREUTH
TELEFON (09 21) 6 59 00
19. 9.78

Dear Sir.

My brother-in - law Chamberlain pronouced his name
Houston like " goose "

Thanks for your kind understanding for my " conduct " since 1945 !

With best greetings

Yours sincerely

Winifred Wagner



Winifred Wagner: Die Geschichte des Hauses Wahnfried von 1914-75

Part I: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9erm7nsY7dw>

Part II: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI5TOGS57tc>



Central Pennsylvania

Perry County Council of the Arts to host Arts Hour at the Landis House

By Sean Sauro | Perry County Times

on March 29, 2014 at 7:00 AM, updated March 29, 2014 at 7:46 AM

For opera lovers the name Richard Wagner is familiar, but the renowned German composer's relationship with a Newport family is more obscure.



NOTEWORTHY - Musicologist Beth Bullard gives Perry County Council of the Arts Executive Director Roger Smith an impromptu history lesson while preparing for her upcoming presentation at an April 6 Sunday Arts Hour at Landis House in Newport. (Sean Sauro photo)

The Perry County Council of the Arts will host a Sunday Arts Hour at 3 p.m., April 6, at the Landis House to highlight Wagner's ties to Clair Landis.

The arts council now owns the Landis family home on N. Fourth Street in Newport.

Working for Swift and Company, an American food processing company, Clair Landis -- Landis House patriarch -- often was relocated outside of the country, according to arts council executive director Roger Smith. He was sent to Cuba during World War I before he and his family were relocated to Hamburg, Germany. There, he purchased a banker's foreclosed property and household goods, including many valuable pieces of art.

At that time, Wagner was a German cultural icon. Landis' boss at Swift and Company arranged for Landis to meet with Wagner's widow, Cosima.

"They went to Wagner's ancestral homeland, and they struck up a relationship," Smith said.

Through his interactions with Cosima and a growing love for Wagner's operas, Landis began collecting opera props and bronze statues, as well as other artworks pertaining to Wagner. When the Nazis came to power, Landis became nervous and fled the country, leaving his belongings behind.

"Clair lied to Gestapo," Smith said. "They came to his office and asked him to identify who on his staff was Jewish. He lied and said no one was."

The Landises returned to the United States where they purchased the house in Newport because Landis' wife, Bertha, originally was from the area.

"Clair lied to Gestapo," Smith said. "They came to his office and asked him to identify who on his staff was Jewish. He lied and said no one was."

The family returned to Germany around 1938 to retrieve their artwork, Smith said, adding that it's the same artwork that is to be showcased at the April 6 showcase.

The Perry County Council of the Arts inherited the house when it was donated by surviving Landis family members along with an endowment, Smith said, adding that since then the council has been working to renovate the building and catalog the artwork.

"I've been here for over six years. When I came in, we had just inherited the Landis House," Smith said. "We didn't really know what was junk and what was artifacts."

While many artifacts have been sorted from the junk, Smith said a degree of restoration is still necessary.

"They lived in the basement for 50 years." He heard stories about Landis' grandchildren playing with the opera props.

"There is still dirt on them. We don't know exactly how to clean them."

"I say that with a great amount of joy because they went unrecognized for so long. There is a fun story here."

The April 6 showcase will feature a short opera history -- comparing pre-Wagner operas to Wagner's operas -- followed by an opera demonstration, and history lessons on Wagner, the Landises' art collection and the Landis family, Smith said.

Musicologist Beth Bullard, who has taught graduate level classes on Wagner, will lead discussion on Wagner and the related artwork.

"They have some pretty significant Wagner items," Bullard said. "They connect Wagner and the world. Wagner, as a phenomenon, spread across the world even in America."

Bullard said her interest in Wagner has taken her as far as India, but the Landis house collection is more impressive than many of the collections she has seen.

"It's amazing to have it right here in Perry County," she said, explaining that she now lives in Carlisle. "It makes my heart go pitter-patter. It's extraordinary."

"People ... tend to think of Perry County as way out in the middle of nowhere, and here is this tremendous treasure trove."

Smith said the arts hour isn't limited to Wagner lovers.

"Our target audience would be Wagner lovers, art lovers who know nothing about Wagner and history lovers."

http://www.pennlive.com/perrycountytimes/index.ssf/2014/03/perry_county_council_of_the_ar.html

The Indoctrinated West:

It's NOT Russia That's "On the Wrong Side of the History", as ...

Andre Vltchek / The 4th Media News | Saturday, March 29, 2014, 21:17 Beijing

Is it really possible that the European public has no clue what was done to Ukraine? Are the men and women of the continent that lives in hallucination, that it is well educated and well informed, really unaware how its own governments have created and supported that 'opposition movement' in Kiev; a movement full of fascists and bigots?

Unfortunately, it is possible, and it is to be expected!

After working in some one hundred and fifty countries, in all the continents, I have finally come to the absolutely clear conclusion: there is no part of the world as brainwashed, so programmed, so indoctrinated, as are both Europe and North America.

There are no people so out of sync with the global reality; people so naively and willing to follow the religious doctrine of market fundamentalism and the self-righteous belief that they, and only they, are the sole guardians of democracy, freedom and virtue, on this planet.

The world is once again in flames, and both Europe and North America (let us please not pretend for one second longer, that the Empire is actually somehow divided between that bad United States and that 'moderate' Europe) are bulldozing, demolishing, moving out of their way everything that is still standing straight and proud; everything that is defending those who used to be defenseless, everything and everyone who is dreaming about, and actually building egalitarian and decent societies.

And the great majority of Europeans are clapping. They read their propaganda sheets and they are clapping. And they are engaged in pathetic pseudo-intellectual discussions, (while sipping, Oh! – In such a sophisticated manner, their refined wine and beer), while millions are being murdered by implementing their bigoted 'interests'.

Entire nations are, again, bleeding, in order to make sure that millions of French or Italian farmers can drive their luxury BMW's (oh, sorry, in Europe they are not marketed as luxury, but as 'reliable cars'), consuming enormous subsidies, for producing and often for not producing anything at all.

The subsidies are paid with the blood of African and Asian people.

How many people in poor countries have to die, so some grandma in Germany or the Czech Republic can go to a doctor, for free, again and again, simply because she is lonely or bored staying at home?

Should there be free medical treatment for all? Yes! Yes. It should be free, and for all. But not just for Europeans, while the rest of the world has to pay the going rate!

How many countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America have to be destabilized, so that the Empire can enjoy its privileges? So that the rich there can be even more obnoxiously rich, and even the poorest citizens can afford to live way above those who belong to the middle classes in the countries that are still being plundered by the West?

Now, please, I am not trying to be funny and I am not trying to play with words: I am honestly wondering... I am humbly asking: "Are people in the West, particularly in Europe... are they pretending that they don't know what is happening in Syria, Venezuela, Thailand and now, particularly, in Ukraine? Or have they simply turned into a cynical assembly of brainwashed degenerates?

Where is that fabled diversity? Where is intellectual courage?

Where are huge demonstrations shaking Paris, Rome, Berlin; demonstrations trying to bring down governments that have been destabilizing a huge European nation – Ukraine, while provoking Russia, the nation that saved the world from Nazism and later helped to liberate many African and Asian nations from the claws of colonialism?

Where are those loud voices protesting against the antagonizing Russia? Don't Europeans know their own history? Russia is not an aggressor; it has been a victim, for at least a hundred years. Russia was attacked by Europe, again and again, and in just one century, tens of millions of Russian people were slaughtered by European fascists, imperialists and 'democrats'.

Russia was attacked at the onset of the WWI, then again, after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, by a joint invasion of US and UK troops. Russia was also attacked by Czech legions, fighting their way to the front, against the Austro-Hungarian Empire (and getting there by circling the globe). Czech legions occupied almost the entire area surrounding the Trans-Siberian railroad, raping, looting, and murdering indiscriminately as they progressed.

Then WWII came, before which, both France and the UK sacrificed just about everything that stood in the way of the Nazis towards the Soviet Union. And yes, then the war itself

took at least twenty million lives. Soviet people vanished in an enormous struggle against Nazism.

Half of my family, of my ancestors, vanished there too, during the siege of Leningrad.

The Cold War was next, and finally that most cynical and Machiavellian act by the West: dragging the USSR into Afghanistan, and destroying it, using jihadi cadres from the Middle East, from South and Southeast Asia.

Finally, the Western puppet – 'opposition democrat', Boris Yeltsin – an alcoholic with a clearly decomposing brain, was helped by Western powers, to grab power. And when the Parliament and the Russian people rebelled, Yeltsin sent the tanks in against both Members of Russian Parliament, and the people on the streets. The Western lackey mass media cheered: "Democracy! Victory!"

Thousands of unarmed people died. The 5th Column smashed the Soviet Union to pieces, using lies, using vicious propaganda that came from Washington, London and elsewhere.

And then the West stood suddenly unopposed. It appeared that there was nothing blocking its way, towards absolute control of the world, anymore.

Colonialist nightmares from the past returned. The world became mono-polar. With only one dogma, one ideology, and only one Empire.

And in just a few years after the Soviet Union 'collapsed', it became total... Total shit!

Is Europe so indoctrinated, is it propagandized to the point that it is really not actually able to recognize, anymore, what their regime has been doing, all over the world?

For years, the West in general, and the European Union in particular, have been destabilizing Ukraine, paying for its 'opposition'... Wait; damn... what are we talking about? Everybody knows it, right? No? Really? Not everyone?

It is not about 'proof' or 'the avalanche of information'. For years, for decades I have been amassing proof and arguments about the horrendous and unthinkable crimes that the West had been committing on all the continents of the world. I have been painstakingly researching what was going on, sometimes risking my life or ruining my health, sometimes doing it without being supported by anything or anyone... actually, that was the scenario, most of the time.

I was doing it because I believed; I believed like an idiot, I believed day and night, that my findings would shock the world, particularly the West... That it will shame the European and North American dictators... That what I show will enrage the public... That the horrors that I had witnessed all over the world, will finally end... you know: That bloody idiotic fairytale world of mine: "People will see the truth and force the monsters who are ruling them, to stop killing human beings everywhere on this beautiful planet."

Today, I have to declare, publicly: I was a fool!

I failed to move people, of course! I tried. I even dropped the journalistic style in my writing, and I began writing as a poet, as the novelist that I am.

I did it because I realized that nobody cares only about facts! There are facts everywhere. Everything is documented. Coups all over the world, financed and planned by the US – it is all available, easily accessible. Yet nobody bothers to read about it!

I tried other tactics – novels, films, journalism mixed with poetry. Nothing! Nothing pushed Westerners to the barricades. Yes, people like me, we are failing to move, to touch, those who are committing crimes against humanity... and also those who are benefiting from enormous global plunder.

Those, mostly well-fed masses, don't give a shit: in Europe, or in the United States. Their governments and companies rule the world, and at least most of the citizens of those countries – Those that get some crumbs. Their level of understanding, their political awareness is way below those in Africa, Latin America and Asia, those very people who are being constantly robbed and sacrificed.

To know and to understand... that would make many Europeans and North Americans uncomfortable... That would mean having to take responsibility; to be co-responsible for the crimes committed by Western governments and multi-nationals. It would mean, god forbid, to take action.

In one recent Reuters article, an author argued that China is watching what Russia is doing. Of course, from the tone of the article, right from the beginning, it was clear that, that what Russia, China, Iran and other countries that disagree with 'Western-style democracy and capitalism' are thinking and doing is absolutely wrong.

Without inviting Russian, Chinese or Venezuelan polemicists, the author selected the 'grievances' of the world, saying that the West should face criticism, by some, for Kosovo and maybe for Libya... Although such criticism would be wrong...

Such a degree of self-discipline and propaganda would be fitting for German newspapers in the 1930's and 40's. And it is becoming the norm in both Europe and North America, as well as in many countries in the 'developing world', where information is fully controlled by Western funding, training programs and other means of arm twisting.

The propaganda coming out of Europe is so mighty, so potent, that it has blurred the eyes of even those that live in the former colonies of the West, including China, India and Indonesia.

It is not about Kosovo and it is not only about Libya, damn it!

In Yugoslavia, which I covered intensively from all sides, the West destroyed an entire country, a great country, one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement (Indonesia had already paid the price in 1965, with between one and three million people brutally slaughtered, in an US-orchestrated coup performed by the military and religious cadres).

In Africa, an entire continent screams in pain. Pretty close to ten million people, have been slaughtered in the Democratic Republic of Congo alone since 1995, by Uganda, and Rwanda, on behalf of Western geopolitical interests. DRC has uranium, Coltan, and diamonds... Its people do not matter. The Belgian King Leopold II succeeded in killing ten million people there one hundred years ago, by chopping off their hands and burning people alive in huts.

France is involved in all of its former colonies. It is once again as sickeningly brutal as it was in the past.

Mali, the Central African Republic, and almost all the countries in the area are destabilized and close to total ruin.

The US-UK-Israeli coalition is undermining Somalia, using Ethiopian, Ugandan, Kenyan and Burundian forces. South Sudan, an artificially created entity, with oil but no ability to govern itself independently, is now on the verge of famine and civil war. And it is at the total mercy of the West.

Zimbabwe and South Africa are standing tall against Western imperialism, but in both places, the West directly finances the 'opposition', and propaganda viciously smears both nations.

Eritrea is facing a direct embargo. For being what is called – The African Cuba (of course nobody knows anything about Eritrea in Europe, except for some educated Italians).

Even the tiny and prosperous Seychelles, known for royal weddings and honeymoons, is facing an 'opposition' groomed from abroad (particularly from the UK), mainly for its free, excellent medical care, and its Cuban-influenced education system.

In both Uganda and Rwanda, brutal and insane fascist regimes are clinging to power, coached openly by people like Tony Blair (advisor to President Kagame).

The Arab Spring has been fully derailed, and in Egypt, a country with powerful labor movements, that have been openly murdered. In the process, thousands of people have died, as pro-Western military and elites have overthrown a democratically elected moderate Muslim government.

The most horrendous religious regimes like those of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar, are being pampered and defended by both North America and Europe.

In Latin America, the governments of Honduras and Paraguay have been overthrown; Venezuela has had to face coup attempts and its own brutal 'opposition', fully and openly financed by the West. Cuba has survived countless terrorist attacks from the North, and the 'opposition' there is also directly financed and supported from abroad.

Bolivia and even Brazil were targeted by the malicious attempts to destroy their left-leaning governments, as is the case with Bolivia, even the geographical integrity of the country has been threatened.

In Asia, things go from bad to worse. Both China and North Korea are being literally provoked, often militarily, from US air force bases located in Okinawa and elsewhere. Countries like the Philippines are being openly pitched against China (PRC) by the US, while Vietnam is also being 'encouraged' to antagonize its enormous neighbor.

It goes without saying that the Chinese 'opposition' has been financed mainly from abroad, for decades. On the contrary, in pro-Western brutal regimes like Indonesia, the Philippines but also Thailand, the West is paying and helping the military and elites to actually control and if necessary, destroy the genuine opposition.

The 'opposition' has been clearly employed to ruin Syria (the West created refugee camps in Turkey and elsewhere, to train and arm the so called 'opposition' there), Venezuela, Ukraine and even Thailand. It has also caused some great damage to Russia and China, as well as countless Latin American and Caribbean countries.

The West is directly attacking foreign countries, by arming and indoctrinating thousands of people who are then paid to overthrow governments and political systems.

Not only is it illegal – it actually amounts to an act of war... undeclared, and covert, but war.

Do the citizens of Europe and North America ignorant of the fact that their governments and companies are fighting undeclared wars and committing acts of terrorism all over the world?

And it has been done for decades, with total impunity, it is perfectly well documented and it takes tremendous discipline to overlook it!

I have worked in almost all those places, making films, writing books and reports. I am intimately familiar with what the West has been doing in Venezuela, Syria, Turkey, China, North Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Congo, Rwanda, the Philippines...

I have proof. But have you noticed that proof is, these days, worth nothing? You can come with the most powerful, most damning and shocking proof, but it will move nobody, propel nobody to action... In the West, I mean. In that 'democratic' and 'free' West!

You can prove that 10 million people were slaughtered, and you will be told: "Thank you... Wonderful! Another cup of coffee?"

And even this incomplete but powerful list of horrors that the West is administering all over the world, is not something that could be defined as new.

It is simply a continuation of colonial culture, of plunders and of mass exterminations, of genocides and holocausts, those that have been taking place for many centuries.

Look at the map of the world at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, and everything will be clear. The West was basically occupying almost the entire planet.

It was plundering thoroughly all that it controlled. It destroyed cultures, raped women, robbed all that it could get its hands on.

Ever wondered from where all that wealth that allowed Europe to build lavish palaces, theatres, museums, public buildings came from?

Of course it came, and is still coming, from the blood of oppressed people, from their hard labor for a pittance, from their sweat, from their humiliation.

And now, people from India, China, Indonesia, Peru, Nigeria, Senegal – they come to Europe and they sigh in front of those

tremendous facades of enormous buildings, in the middle of well-manicured parks, on board fast moving trains.

And some say: "What a civilization! What a wonderful part of the world! Here they respect other human beings. Here they are kind to others."

Well, it is built from your wealth that evaporated, from the terrible labor of your grandparents, from the rape of your female ancestors, from the cracking of whips on the naked backs of your male ancestors.... It is built on the ruins of your culture, of your civilization. It is all built, because you were left with nearly nothing, and for decades and centuries forced to live in shit...

The majority of people of what is now Latin America vanished! Their religions were destroyed and so were their languages. The Inca people had to obliterate their temples, and from those stones, enormous Christian cathedrals were erected. And they were decorated with gold and silver, dug by once free but now enslaved Incas. In Cusco and Potosi, Quito and Cuenca, everywhere.

Slaves poured out from Africa to Latin America and to North America, as well as to the Caribbean! Entire states in Africa, entire families were ruined, destroyed, uprooted. Human beings were treated like animals, while literary salons in London and Paris were enjoying refined music and perfumes. Countries like Germany and Belgium performed clear genocides – The Belgians in Congo, Germans in what is now Namibia.

There was no mercy then, as there is no mercy now.

The Christian religion, that outrageous machinery of terror has been part of this for centuries, walking hand in hand with the Conquistadors and Crusaders. Periodically it took the lead in the massacres. The Church had been greedier than monarchies, and it was power hungry, oppressive and brutal. Christianity, that symbol of Western civilization, brought torture and slavery; it blessed the men and the deeds that murdered millions.

So far, there has been no attempt to declare Christianity illegal because of the genocides it performed, strictly based on crimes against humanity.

And this culture is now scalding Russia, China, Venezuela, and Iran – this culture that has murdered billions. And nobody is laughing. No one is rolling on the floor, dying from amusement.

In the Middle East, the Brits bombed and gassed 'those niggers' (both Lloyd George and Winston Churchill saw 'lesser races' as something worth exterminating, if 'necessary'), divided nations, manipulated and enslaved them.

'Divide and rule' led to horrific consequences later, like the 'Partition' of India and Pakistan, or genocide in what is now Bangladesh.

In Asia, just about everything was occupied, plundered and raped, including such enormous areas as the sub-Continent, or China and the archipelago that is now known as Indonesia.

All was neatly divided. French Indochina, British India, and Dutch Indonesia.

Western Empires fought over vast foreign lands and no Europeans protested (as they are not protesting now, against neo-colonialism) against the genocides that were committed by their rulers. Some countries like France 'successfully' exterminated a hundred percent of the people on some islands in the Caribbean, and came very close to exterminating the entire population of Rapa Nui in Polynesia.

Rape, looting, murder, have been all over the world. The West still feels that it has the full right to determine who lives and who dies, and who should live which way.

The great Swiss psychoanalyst Gustav Jung described European and Western culture as a 'pathology', as an illness. To him, as a doctor, Europe was a patient, a seriously ill one, in constant need to terrorize others, to control, to steal, and to murder.

And Jung was not the only one. J. P. Sartre's writing on colonialism is as damning and also much more detailed.

But now, after decades of huge propaganda injections, everything is 'forgotten and forgiven'. But is it? Europeans 'do not know' what horrors they have been spreading all over the globe. Westerners in general do not know. They are conditioned not to know. They have eliminated almost all 'comparative thinking' in their own continent, and simultaneously in their colonies.

People do not know how to compare, anymore. The media and scholars are discouraged from comparing crimes and brutality. It is obvious why. No continent, no culture, committed such monstrous crimes, performed such horrible and unforgivable deeds, as Western 'cultures' and 'civilizations'. They committed them and they are still busy committing them. Until this very moment!

This essay is just a brief reminder of 'who is speaking'! Who is pointing fingers at Russia right now, and who is demonizing China, and calling true Latin American democracies – 'dictatorships'.

One feels like paraphrasing an old Communist slogan, and shouting:

"People of the world who still have some brain left – wake up and unite!"

It is clear that the West is on an offensive: it tries to annihilate all dissent that has grown since the destruction of the old multi-polar world.

But a new, perhaps better, multi-polar world has emerged.

Some parts of it are much more informed and educated about the horrific terror that comes with allowing the West to rule over this world, unopposed.

It is not Russia that is 'on the wrong side of the history', as Obama recently declared.

It is the West, clearly and patently. And just to say; that it is not good enough... Not good enough, anymore!

Andre Vltchek is a novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He has covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. His discussion with Noam Chomsky On Western Terrorism is now going to print. His critically acclaimed political novel Point of No Return is now re-edited and available. Oceania is his book on Western imperialism in the South Pacific. His provocative book about post-Suharto Indonesia and the market-fundamentalist model is called "Indonesia – The Archipelago of Fear". He has just completed the feature documentary, "Rwanda Gambit" about Rwandan history and the plunder of DR Congo. After living for many years in Latin America and Oceania, Vltchek presently resides and works in East Asia and Africa. He can be reached through his website or his Twitter.



sacocherburrypascal said on Monday, March 31, 2014, 18:19

Heya i'm for the first time here. I found this board and I find it truly useful & it helped me out a lot. I hope to give something back and aid others like you aided me.]

[Reply]



Fredrick Toben said on Tuesday, April 1, 2014, 4:56

There is just one problem the writer in this whole analysis has not addressed and that is telling:: He does not mention the Israeli/Palestinian tragedy – the Jewish factor that is driving the West as an invisible, unmentionable agent. I wonder why?

[Reply]

<http://www.4thmedia.org/2014/03/29/the-indoctrinated-west-its-not-russia-thats-on-the-wrong-side-of-the-history-as/>

More comment on Australia's move to scrap its *HOLOCAUST* Law and enact the *TOBEN* Amendments

Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson believes race hate laws are bizarre and unequal
STAFF WRITERS, NEWS.COM.AU, MARCH 30, 2014 5:20PM



Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson believes making certain racial terms acceptable to use will help restore equality and resolve "bizarre" race hate laws. Source: News Limited

HUMAN Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson has claimed race hate laws are bizarre and unequal.

In an interview with Fairfax, Mr Wilson said that racial discrimination laws are leading to certain racially loaded terms being used within communities without any implication, but are forbidden to be used by outsiders and punished if so. Mr Wilson sees this as uneven and muddying the waters of what's considered racially offensive.

Asked whether he was referring to the word "nigger", Mr Wilson said: "I won't say it, but that's right."

Mr Wilson believes that repealing section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, which makes it unlawful to insult people based on their race or ethnicity, would restore "equality" to discrimination laws. By allowing free speech he claims it will actually help cure bigotry.

MORE: Changes to the racial discrimination act explained

"The provisions provide the basis for a good discussion about getting the balance right, and establish the correct test of equality before the law."

But refining race laws is not as black and white as that.

Australia's first indigenous female MP, Senator Nova Peris, spoke out in Parliament about how it felt to be called "nigger" by a fellow athlete:

"We have all seen the devastating effect racial abuse has on people. They are not the same. During my sporting career, I did not care if people attacked or criticised me for my performance on the field, but I did care when I was attacked and criticised for the colour of my skin and called a 'nigger' by my own Aussie team mate, and I took action against it. Racism hurts", the former Olympian said.

Federal Attorney-General, George Brandis, who is spearheading the repeal of Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, said this week Australians should have a right to be bigots.

"People do have a right to be bigots you know. In a free country people do have rights to say things that other people find offensive or insulting or bigoted."

EDITOR'S NOTE: An earlier version of this article had a misleading headline, 'We should be able to say n****'. News.com.au apologises to Mr Wilson for any offence it may have caused.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/human-rights-commissioner-tim-wilson-believes-race-hate-laws-are-bizarre-and-unequal/story-fni0xqrb-1226868911981>

Race law changes could harm Asian engagement:
Race Discrimination Commissioner
By Michelle Grattan, University of Canberra, 1 APR 2014 - 12:58AM



Race Discrimination Commissioner Tim Soutphommasane will suggest today that the government's proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act could harm Australia's ability to most effectively engage with the Asian century.

Race Discrimination Commissioner Tim Soutphommasane will suggest today that the government's proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act could harm Australia's ability to most effectively engage with the Asian century.

In a speech to be delivered to the Australia Asia Education Engagement Symposium in Melbourne, Soutphommasane says that the principle of racial tolerance must continue to be defended as essential to the legislative architecture of a multicultural Australia.

Were it not to be supported wholeheartedly "we could end up as an Australia that is more insular and less able to flourish in the so-called Asian century".

In relation to the problem of racism, he quotes Donald Horne in *The Lucky Country*, written 50 years ago, while the White Australia policy was still in place, writing that "public expression of the racist strain has become weaker and weaker".

"Over the years, sentiments have evolved in the direction of equality. Until recently very few Australians would have been prepared to offer an explicit defence of a right to express bigotry," Soutphommasane says.

(Attorney-General George Brandis last week said people had the right to be bigots. This further inflamed the debate about the government's plan to water down the act in the name of free speech.)

"We may recognise that people in their heart of hearts may hold racial prejudices, but we knew enough to know that we shouldn't be encouraging it," Soutphommasane says.

"It is only one small step from having thoughts of bigotry in one's mind and expressing it as [an] outward act of racial discrimination."

He says the government's proposed changes, if enacted, would severely weaken existing legal protections against racial vilification.

"They would give legal sanction to the most serious forms of racial vilification if expressed in the course of participating in a public discussion. They would, I fear, embolden a minority with bigoted views to amplify their prejudice."

It is important to reflect on this debate in the context of multicultural Australia and Australian engagement with Asia, he says.

"For one thing, the Racial Discrimination Act represents a pillar in the legislative architecture of Australia's multicultural policy," he says.

"For another thing, our cultural engagement with Asia will in large part be a function of our own domestic ability to deal with cultural diversity. Our laws have a powerful effect in expressing our values and in setting the tone of our society." Allan Gyngell, former senior public servant and former head of the Lowy Institute, said the debate over the RDA changes would contribute to a sense of déjà vu among certain people in the elites of Asia. But it was not in the category of the debate about Hansonism in the 1990s.

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult to, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has no relevant affiliations.

Article by The Conversation

<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/04/01/race-law-changes-could-harm-asian-engagement-race-discrimination-commissioner>

Race act debate misses the point

WARREN MUNDINE, THE AUSTRALIAN, APRIL 01, 2014 12:00AM

I'VE watched the debate over the amendments to section 18C the Racial Discrimination Act with deep frustration. The debate is sucking up oxygen from the important work this government needs to do and threatens the real change it has committed to deliver for indigenous people. And all this to appease Andrew Bolt.

The proposed amendments narrow the definition of racial vilification and introduce a "public discussion" exemption. An exemption so broad that protection from racial vilification might become something only to be enjoyed by people in the privacy of their own home.

The government says the changes are to protect the right to free speech; but at the same time haven't followed a strict free-speech doctrine. Last week, the Attorney-General said that the laws would still apply to Holocaust denial (although he wouldn't be drawn on a specific example). This shouldn't matter if the motivation is to uphold the right to free speech. In America — where free speech is a constitutional right — even Holocaust denial isn't prohibited.

As it happens, under the new laws people can incite hatred against Jewish people while participating in public discussion of a wide range of subjects. Holocaust deniers will have a wide berth to peddle their misinformation. Evidently, the drafters didn't manage to find a form of words that would allow Bolt's comments on the one hand but prevent public hate speech on the other.

Perhaps this is because they don't appreciate why Bolt's comments were so offensive to indigenous people.

Bolt was censured under section 18C for accusing named individuals of choosing to identify as Aboriginal for personal and political gain. He believes skin colour and ancestry proportions determine Aboriginality and these individuals did not meet those criteria.

The original inhabitants of Australia didn't see themselves as an "Aboriginal race". They were part of hundreds of separate tribal nations. I'm from the Bundjalung nation and also a descendant of the Gumbaynggirr and Yuin peoples.

On my desk there's a photo of me with my children and my grandchildren. The people in this photo have a range of different skin tones, eye and hair colours. They are all my descendants and therefore they are all Bundjalung. To say that any of them are not Bundjalung would be like saying they are not part of my family.

In modern Western societies, family and nationality/citizenship are different concepts. I vote according to where I live. My nationality is based on birth and/or government recognition of citizenship, not on who my family is. There's a distinction between the private and the public, family life and civic life.

In Aboriginal tribes, family and nationality/citizenship are the same. Traditional law is centred around the kinship system — a highly developed and complex system of rules that defined your position in the tribe, who you could marry and interact with and even your rights and responsibilities over land and

sea. Your tribe is your family and your family is your tribe, despite being thousands of people spread over a wide geography. Some of your aunts and uncles are officially your mothers and fathers, providing a natural welfare system. Others play a role in your ceremony. Under traditional law, there's no distinction between your family and your nationality, between the private and the public, between familial life and civic life.

Kinship systems have rules for how outsiders fit in. Because traditional law defines everything in the universe, an outsider can't exist if not brought under traditional law.

European colonisation cut a swath through traditional societies. Aboriginal tribes had to adapt to new situations — having outsiders on their land who were not under traditional laws; being moved off their lands to settlements with other tribal groups; being prohibited from speaking their languages or practising ceremony.

Aboriginal women had children to non-Aboriginal men. Sometimes this was consensual. There were non-Aboriginal men like my Irish great-grandfather who married Aboriginal women and cared for them. There were also many instances where Aboriginal women were raped or pressured into situations they had no control over. Consequently, there have been "light-skinned" people in Aboriginal tribes for nearly as long as there have been Europeans on this continent. Traditional laws don't define a tribal group's members by physical appearance.

Having "white" people living in Aboriginal communities was a conundrum for authorities, especially in a segregated society. Governments tried to formally categorise people of indigenous descent based on "blood-quotum", labelling them with terms like "half caste" and "quadroon", usually based on appearance. But Aboriginal tribal groups had defined themselves under traditional laws for thousands of years. We didn't need government telling us who was in our tribe and who was not; who was in our family and who was not.

Many conservatives mistakenly believe Bolt was prevented from making legitimate comment on whether special benefits are being abused or misdirected. I agree that people should be free to comment and debate on those topics. But they already are. Bolt can talk freely about these issues without breaching section 18C.

Bolt can point out if someone with no indigenous ancestry receives a prize for people of indigenous descent. He can point out if a special benefit for people who are disadvantaged has been given to someone who doesn't meet the relevant disadvantage test. No breach of section 18C.

Bolt can argue that a prize or benefit for indigenous people should have a disadvantage test, such as means testing or a condition the recipient be from a remote area. No breach of 18C there, either.

He can even argue there should be no prizes, awards or special benefits, whether given by government or the private sector, that are limited to people of particular ethnic or national backgrounds; that all prizes must be open to all people. Even that wouldn't breach 18C.

However, if Bolt wants to argue that a prize or special benefits for indigenous people should only be awarded to people with dark skin or who are "full blood" then my sympathies end. Because that's the mentality of the authorities-of-old who purported to define my tribe — my family — by appearance and by blood-quantum.

Since the judgment, Bolt regularly posts photos of indigenous people on his blog who don't fit his view of what an Aboriginal person should look like with the caption "No Comment" and a statement that his lawyers won't let him say anything more. Targets of his "No Comment" comment include schoolchildren who visited the Prime Minister and Josephine Cashman, a member of the Indigenous Advisory Council. Given the chance, perhaps he'd post my family photo to his "No Comment" series too.

If the RDA has "hair triggers" that go beyond what's needed to keep racial vilification at bay, then let's look at those in a logical and rigorous way. Indigenous and other community

groups would be happy to participate in that conversation. I am happy to work with government on that too.

But let's not cause division and upheaval over one newspaper columnist.

We have real, serious issues to address in this country. Whether Bolt can engage in his particular form of public shaming and bullying of people of indigenous descent is not one of them. And he seems to be doing it just fine, anyway.

Last February, Tony Abbott released the annual Closing The Gap report. It illustrated just how much work we have to do in indigenous communities. It was a sobering day, but also one of hope. Here was a prime minister and a government taking a new approach to indigenous affairs; cutting through the rhetoric and bureaucracy and focused on real, practical change. Such as the government's Remote School Attendance policy, a community driven program that is designed to relentlessly address chronic truancy in remote indigenous schools.

That same day, the Indigenous Advisory Council first spoke with Mr Abbott and Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel

Scullion about a radical proposal to divert all juvenile offenders out of detention and into jobs and education, starting with a pilot in Western Australia. They gave the proposal their backing and we are working right now with the WA government to implement it.

And these are just a start. This government has committed itself to making real change for indigenous people through commercial and economic development, through jobs and education. With real change occurring not in a generation, not in a decade, but now.

Let's not squander that opportunity. Let's get back to the real issues.

Nyunggai Warren Mundine is the managing director of Nyungga Black, executive chairman of the Australian indigenous Chamber of Commerce and chairman of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council.

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/nationalaffairs/opinion/race-act-debate-misses-the-point/story-e6frgd0x-1226870153421>

Iran's Leader Doubts Holocaust Happened

Thursday, March 27, 2014, Israel Today Staff



Former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was not alone among the Iranian leadership in believing and promoting the notion that the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews was all a fabrication.

"The Holocaust is an event whose reality is uncertain and, if it happened, it's uncertain how it happened," Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said last week at an event marking the Persian new year.

Khamenei criticized Western countries for prosecuting those of their own citizens who question the veracity of the Holocaust, while at the same time begrudging Iranians the right to hold fast to their beliefs.

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of Israel**

Shortly after his election last year, new Iranian President Hassan Rouhani was widely reported to have differentiated himself from his predecessor by telling foreign media that the Nazi crimes against the Jews were real and condemnable.

However, Iran's official FARS news agency said Rouhani's remarks were mistranslated, and that he had never acknowledged a Jewish holocaust.

In February of this year, Iranian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Javad Zarif seemingly acknowledged the Holocaust, only to be summoned before the Iranian parliament for a reprimand.

Comments

Thursday, March 27, 2014 Papagord • 17 hours ago

Personally I don't think the Ayatollah really exists, he is just a figment of Iranian propaganda!

Word of Power Ministries, Sri • 10 hours ago

'satan is a liar and a father of lies' Yeshua said. He has no problem in getting himself a mouth in this world which is going towards destruction. For the whole world is under the power of the devil. He knows he has only a little time before the

glorious return of Yahweh Yeshua Hamashiach to His throne in Jerusalem!. satan is mad at Yahweh Elohim and His own people. Why any of Yahweh's people get agitated? A bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit!

People of Israel be strong. Trust in Him at all times. He will fulfill all His promises He made to your fathers...Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and David...

Hannah Rikman Naomi • 14 hours ago

You just keep right on praising Jeshua! He is our only true source of comfort, joy and peace!

Dick • 2 hours ago

Jewish history is recorded in heaven. 6 millions Jews, the prints, skulls and bones left behind and millions of survivors are more enough witnesses. The Court of law allows only 2. Liars are recorded in Hell. Iran and America must repent before they will suffer the wrath of the God of Israel.

Share > prbrown60 • 18 hours ago

For the former Iranian president to deny that the Jewish Holocaust at the hands of the Nazis during WW2, goes to show how stupidly illiterate this moron is.

Richard Barnes • 17 hours ago

I like "yelling Yaalon"! He calls a shoe a shoe. I don't like the prospects of war, but I live in this sin filled world and from time to time it becomes needful to fight for your continued existence. This I believe is one of those times. A large and deadly war will almost certainly ensue a military strike on Iran because the western nations took far too long talking and now something must be done before we wake up to a nuclear attack from Iran. Iran is regrettably in a much better position then they were 3 years ago and I fear that this could be a truly horrible conflict. Yet to sit by and talk only allows Iran to get so close to the bomb that they may indeed field one or more in just weeks. We really don't know and can't really take the chance. But the west thinks we can just sit and hope and it will all just go away. The Chamberlain community of the world waves a piece of paper and shouts peace in our time only to be made a fool and cost more lives than the Churchill community who tried to prevent a worse war. As a veteran I can state that war is horrible, but losing a war is MUCH more so. Losing this one is unthinkable! These are the end times that the Bible speaks of. I wrote a book in 2012 that discusses some of the prophecies written about in the Bible. It's a short read of 6 or 7 pages and it's totally free. I hope you will have a look: <http://www.booksie.com/religio...>

<http://www.israeltoday.co.il/NewsItem/tabid/178/nid/24527/Default.aspx?hp=readmore>